

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming. I was especially appalled with presidents Bushs "Policy speech" last week. It was basically free advertisement against John Kerry. Once the media realized what was going on the broadcast should have been immediately halted. Luckily I make the effort to keep myself informed but many Americans do not make that effort and base their opinions on what they see on the television.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,
Aaron Schmeckpeper
American Voter

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